

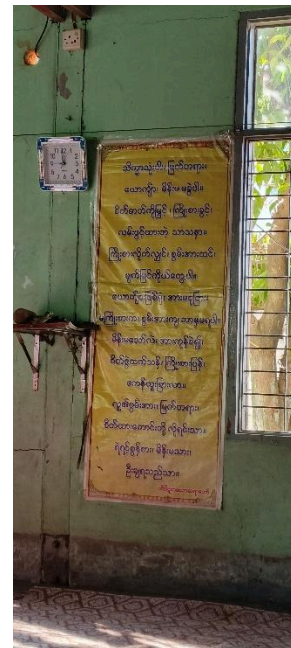


# BETTER BURMA

To Metta In Action,

Today, we visited *Pañāsingī Nunnery* which is located in *Konetalabaung Village* [Please, redact the name necessarily] in Mingaladon Township. Obviously, it's the area on the outskirts of Yangon and we could see a lot of factories there. Among the factories, houses are located close to each other. Soon after we exited the No. 3 Highway, we were met with a bustling bazaar, where small vegetable and meat stalls lined both sides of the narrow street. Although the roads were concrete pavements, it seems the local authorities – the junta's Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) had neglected these areas where most of the population is the basic class of people: they were poor-conditioned. Not only in this area but I also witnessed the same condition in the other areas of Yangon. It's not too strange that the people's government, which was elected to serve the people, was ousted against their will, and who else would neglect them more effectively?

As we arrived at the gate of the nunnery, a man whom we guessed to be a relative of the Head Nun, came out and assisted in stopping the other traffic so we could enter the gate and park, as the lane was too narrow and busy with traffic. The Head Nun came near our car and said *Mingalarbar* to Daw Ariya and welcomed us. As soon as I arrived, I caught a glimpse of an assistant nun helping some young nuns, around the age of 4 or 5, get dressed in the upper nun's garment in the most adorable way. After we sat on the floor chatting with the Head Nun Daw Pañnā, all the nuns walked in, and they were in a line. They were seated in rows behind the Head Nun, and I instantly noticed the discipline of the nunnery school. I also saw a post on the wall, writing the poem composed by the Most Revered *Tipitaka Yaw Sayadaw* praising the nuns.



In fact, the nunnery offers free primary education for all the young children from the quarter, regardless of religion, ethnicity, and gender. We saw Hindu boys and girls here, too. There are 250 students studying at the nunnery school.

During the conversation, we learned that she is originally from Myaung township which is next to my home township in Sagaing Region. She said that she had



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entered the monastic order since she was young and she visited her native village once a year before the coup hit. After 2021, she could not visit there due to road insecurities and we know that her village on the sandbar areas in the middle of the Chindwin River is so tough with the recurring armed encounters between the insurgency alliances and the junta's troops. [My home township, her township, and Yesagy township in the west of Chindwin River are located like a triangle, and all 3 townships are tough. Her village is near the confluence of Rivers Ayeyarwady and Chindwin.] She told us that she has been serving the *Sāsana* in the lower part of Burma since her youth, and she was reflecting on some of her childhood life in the peaceful times of our region. In fact, this is true and not boasting – the people from *Anyar* (the term for the upper part of the country) naturally have peaceful minds and patience to bear the sufferings. We were in the same thought speculating that our people there would no longer be able to bear the brutality of the junta and hence most of them chose to defend themselves and resist the oppression.

She said that her students include some ethnic children whom she has taken care for since before the coup, and now some children coming from her hometown and surprisingly, some come from Ayeyarwady Region as the armed conflicts from Rakhine State came closer to Ayeyarwady Region. Overcoming the restrictions of the local authorities from the education department, the compassionate head nun



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accepted to enroll those students from war-torn areas in the middle or almost-ending period of the academic year. “If we didn’t accept them, who else would? They would be helpless and it’d be a waste of a year! So, I didn’t listen to them though they were forcing noisily,” said the nun, smiling lively. To see her smile,

meaning her delight in helping the vulnerable children, I was reminded of my childhood master – Phaung Daw Oo Sayadaw who usually disobeys the unjust rules from the education department authorities, in his life. I can sense the same compassion and courage in most of the monastic schools and nunnery schools. I can see this braveness in the eyes of the leading monks and nuns of these types of schools. She shockingly said that the junta’s authorities conducted the on-site investigation at the school all day long. In the previous years, they used to do it for



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just a few hours and mostly did it at one single assembly point for all monastery and nunnery schools.

After Daw Ariya and I contributed the donation to the Head Nun, we had some chats with her assistants – a nun and teachers. Some of the teachers are from Ayeyarwady Region and they have been helping the Head Nun who spent her youth to study her monastic studies in their original township. Talking about her joy in her young days in Ayeyarwady Region, I discussed the previous causes of our life in Samsara, giving an example of the Most Venerable Mohnyin Sayadaw who was born in Ayeyarwady Region in the southern part of Myanmar, served the Sāsana in our Monywa region for his life. Another example is my grand-aunt, who lived as a nun for her entire life and founded a nunnery in Karen State, in the southern part of the country, to teach the next generation of nuns. I encouraged them that we are proud of them for being a monastic school's volunteer teachers as my wife and I studied at a monastic school. I also gifted the Head Nun and her assistant nuns with the notable words of my childhood master – Mahar Bodhi Tahtaung Sayadaw who said, “Nuns are women heroes!”

After our meaningful and inspiring conversation (for all of us), we visited the classrooms. Daw Ariya and I encouraged the students to focus on their studies so they could promote their lives and help the communities around them. Daw Ariya, in a gentle voice, said “Study well,” in Burmese and the children were happy and said yes harmoniously. I asked a classroom what poem they learned and requested them to sing out. They happily and harmoniously sang the poem called “Our Mother”. I asked them if they love their mom and they said yes. I asked again, “Who of you helped your mom this morning?” And, some students raised their hands, and the other children were smiling and looking at each other. I praised the ones who helped and the others for their honesty. I urged them to help their parents as much as they can, and it also means ‘helping their parents’ when they study well. We said bye, leaving a thought for them to continue, and we moved to another classroom. In the downstairs of a wooden house, there was a kindergarten and Grade-1 classroom. We also went in there and we asked them to sing a poem that they know. They sang the poem “The Boy Picked up a Beautiful Pencil (လှူကလေးနဲ့ ခဲတံ)” which teaches the kids about ethics and morality. I asked them what it meant, and added an explanation that **we must have sympathy for others**. I told them that we should care for the others’ feelings so they would not feel sad. The nun, who is the



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classroom teacher, smiled with a sense of approval. I hope she will continue to explain to the kids better.

When I talked to the teacher nun for a short while, I learned that she knows my sister's in-laws from our township and we smiled together warmly. The world is so small! On the way back to our host monasteries, I was continuously



thinking about the kindergarten poem and sympathy. I wondered if the egotistic junta leaders didn't learn this poem and why they did not care for the will of millions of people in the country. I discovered that we must work harder to provide education for all children in the country as much as we can, so as to foster the practices of sympathy and encourage the monastic and nunnery schools that teach the fundamentals of moral education. Encouraging these compassionate monastic communities who dedicate their life to providing education, means to enhance the morality, peace, and justice within the society. It does not only mean supporting the monastics but it truly means encouraging the peace in Myanmar.

Please, find the video of the children sending their wishes to all the donors.

Thank you very much to all international donors who have contributed all their support, i.e. not only monetarily but also mental support, to all these monastic communities who stand with the people suffering, and who live in the people.

Sādhu. Sādhu. Sādhu for all your merits. May you all have peace forever. May you all discover the Eternal Peace inside you.

Best regards with *Metta*,

Zaw Win Htet from Burma.

**Monastic Support Team Leader,  
Better Burma.**

Link to Photos:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DJWDQ6V653d7w8-oA2t\\_hVBCEdj84WJx?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DJWDQ6V653d7w8-oA2t_hVBCEdj84WJx?usp=sharing)